



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

NEWS

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Blagojevich Administration officials announce crack down on impaired drivers during the holidays

***IDOT funds extra State Police, Secretary of State's Police and
local patrols; message is: "You Drink and Drive. You Lose."***

SPRINGFIELD— On behalf of Governor Rod R. Blagojevich, Department of Transportation Secretary Milton R. Sees along with Secretary of State Jesse White today announced that State and local law enforcement agencies will crack down on impaired drivers over the holidays. Funding provided by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) will allow the Illinois State Police (ISP), the Secretary of State's Police and more than 170 local police agencies across the state to conduct hundreds of roadside safety checks and saturation patrols to keep our roads and highways safe from impaired drivers.

"Police across the state will be sacrificing time with their own families during the holidays to keep the roads clear of drunk drivers and to help ensure that the rest of us can have a happy and safe holiday season," said Gov. Blagojevich. "The message is simple: if you drink and drive, you lose. So please make sure you have a sober designated driver."

Blagojevich administration officials, joined by Secretary of State White and representatives from the anti-impaired driving group MADD, announced the stepped up DUI enforcement efforts at a series of three news conferences around the state at the Sangamon County Jail in Springfield, the St. Clair County Jail in Belleville and the Cook County Jail in Chicago.

The roadside safety checks and saturation patrols are paid for with federal traffic safety funding from IDOT's Division of Traffic Safety as part of the "*You Drink and Drive. You Lose*" campaign. IDOT is providing \$750,000 to pay for police overtime for the patrols, and \$450,000 for an accompanying media campaign.

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“It is a top priority of mine to use the resources of my office to combat drunk driving,” said Secretary of State White. “I recently spoke with people who have lost loved ones to drunk drivers. The heartbreak and grief these victims endure is unimaginable. Over the holidays, the Secretary of State Police is teaming up with IDOT and law enforcement agencies around the state in a vigilant effort to prevent fatalities and injuries caused by drunk driving.”

“This holiday season, all of law enforcement will be mindful of the threat impaired drivers place on every family,” said Illinois State Police Director Larry G. Trent. “The Illinois State Police will team up with more than 170 law enforcement agencies to crack down on those who become impaired and then choose to get behind the wheel. The majority of traffic fatalities during last year’s Christmas and New Year’s weekends were alcohol related. In an effort to change that statistic, the ISP will be conducting special patrols targeting impaired drivers. We are hopeful drivers will make the responsible decision not to drive while impaired so law enforcement officers don’t have to make that decision for them.”

There were 32 alcohol related fatalities in Illinois during December, 2006. During the 2006 Christmas holiday weekend alone, 8 out of the 10 motor vehicle crash fatalities that occurred involved at least one driver with alcohol in his or her system. During the 2006 New Year’s weekend, six out of 13 fatalities were alcohol related.

Overall, 2006 was the safest year on Illinois roads since 1924, with a total of 1,254, 109 fatalities fewer than the year before. This year, as of Dec. 17, the state is on pace to set a new low since 1924, with 20 fewer fatalities through the same date last year.

“Under the leadership of Gov. Blagojevich, Illinois saw a historic reduction in the number of traffic fatalities last year,” said IDOT Secretary Milton R. Sees. “But the tragic fact remains that 47 percent of those fatalities were alcohol related and thus may have been preventable. IDOT is proud to support the efforts of the Illinois State Police and local police in combating impaired drivers. The message is simple: *You Drink and Drive. You Lose.*”

“My heart goes out to all those who have lost loved ones due to this senseless and utterly preventable crime,” said Stephen Carr, MADD Illinois Executive Director. “We must do all we can to stop others from experiencing what they did. Through efforts like the *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* Holiday crackdown, we will move closer to eliminating drunk driving in Illinois.”

Earlier this month, in advance of the holiday enforcement activities, Gov. Blagojevich proclaimed December as Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention month and called on all Illinois cities, towns and villages to join the State in reminding the public about the dangers posed by drunk and drugged drivers during the holidays.

State officials recommend the following steps to keep drunk drivers off the roads and to ensure a safe and festive holiday for everyone:

- Plan a safe way home before the festivities begin;
- Before drinking, please designate a sober driver and give that person your keys;

- If you're impaired, use a taxi, call a sober friend or family member, or use public transportation to ensure you get home safely;
- If you happen to see a drunk driver on the road, call 911 or contact local law enforcement;
- And remember, if you know someone who is about to drive or ride while impaired, take their keys and help them make other arrangements to get to where they are going safely.

For more information about the Division of Traffic Safety's impaired driving and safety campaigns, go to: <http://www.dot.state.il.us/safety.html>.